

***REMARKS***

This responds to the Office Action dated January 14, 2004.

**CLAIM REJECTIONS – 35 U.S.C. 112**

Claims 3 and 9 were rejected under § 112, second paragraph as being indefinite.

Claim 3 has been changed as suggested by the Examiner.

Claim 9 was objected to because of the expression “the balloon-expanded ring stents.” This language has been modified.

**CLAIM REJECTIONS – 35 U.S.C. 103**


Claims 1, 4-7 and 9 were rejected under § 103(a) as unpatentable over Clouse in view of Lam. Lam is used to supply Clouse with ratcheted ring stents longitudinally displaced from each other.

Claim 1, and therefore its dependent claims, have been modified to provide the support rods being devoid of the tubular sheath at a position along the length of the support rods where blood can move laterally between the support rods to supply blood to branches off the blood vessel. This is not disclosed by the prior art.

Claim 9 has been amended in a similar fashion, to set forth the tubular sheaths, the support members being attached to and extending along the tubular sheath, the elongated support members being devoid of the tubular sheath at a position along the length of the support members such that blood can move laterally between the elongated support members and supply blood to the branches intersecting the vessel and the elongated support members.

Applicant acknowledges with gratitude the suggestion made by the Examiner concerning the language of claim 3, and has adopted the suggested language. Applicant submits that this application should now be in condition for allowance, and appropriate action is courteously solicited.

Respectfully submitted,

  
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